one or more sections of U-channel affixed to each of the vertical posts and the rails for mounting the infill panel.

A10 (consult)

Please replace current claim 7 with the following:

7. (Amended) The hand rail assembly as defined in claim 5, wherein the infill panel is a mesh screen.

A11

Please replace current claim 8 with the following:

8. (Amended) The hand rail assembly as defined in claim 5, wherein the infill panel is a solid panel.

A12

Please cancel claims ~~9-14~~.

Please replace current claim 15 with the following:

15. (Amended) The hand rail assembly according to claim 17, further comprising structural fittings interconnecting the rails with the posts, at least one of the structural fittings comprising a slip-on fitting having an inner diameter greater than or equal to the outer diameter of the plastic sheathing on the posts or rails.

A13

Please replace current claim 16 with the following:

16. (Amended) The hand rail assembly according to claim 15, wherein the structural fitting further comprises a set screw operable to press against the plastic sheathing such that the fitting grips the sheathing and the post or rail without penetrating the sheathing.

A14

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17. A hand rail assembly with an infill panel, comprising:

a pair of spaced apart vertical posts each having a lower end and an upper end, the lower ends being configured to engage a support surface, each of the posts having a height and an outside diameter;

replaceable polymerized sheathing surrounding each of the posts, the sheathing having an inner diameter equal to or greater than the outside diameter of the posts, the sheathing extending substantially the entire height of the posts;

an upper rail extending between the upper ends of the vertical posts and releasably engaged to the upper ends of the vertical posts, the upper rail having a length and an outside diameter;

a lower rail extending between the vertical posts and positioned below the upper rail, the lower rail releasably engaged to the vertical posts and having a length and an outside diameter;

replaceable polymerized sheathing surrounding each of the rails, the sheathing having an inner diameter equal to or greater than the outside diameter of the rails, the sheathing extending substantially the entire length of the rails;

the vertical posts and the rails together defining a perimeter frame having a framed area defined therein, the framed area having a top edge defined by the upper rail, a lower edge defined by the lower rail, and sides defined by the vertical posts; and

an infill panel supported in the framed area.

18. The hand rail assembly according to claim 17, further comprising structural fittings interconnecting the rails with the posts, at least one of the structural fittings comprising a slip-in fitting having a base with a radiused end surface matching the outer diameter of the plastic sheathing on one of the posts or rails, the fitting further having an engagement member extending from the base, the engagement member configured to engage the inner diameter of one of the posts or rails.

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19. The hand rail assembly according to claim 18, wherein the structural fitting further comprises a connector operable to connect the fitting to a post or rail such that the end surface mates with the outer diameter of the post or rail.

A14 (amended)

20. The hand rail assembly according to claim 18, wherein the base of the structural fitting has an outer diameter substantially the same as the outer diameter of the plastic sheathing on the rails.

21. The hand rail system according to claim 18, wherein the engagement member comprises a pair of engagement fingers shaped to fit into the inner diameter of the post or ail.

Please cancel claims ~~22-24~~.

Please add new claim 25, as follows:

A15

25. (New) The hand rail assembly according to claim 17, wherein each of said horizontal rails and said vertical posts comprise substantially straight members and said polymerized sheathing is substantially straight.